Deepest sympathy

And no, Purple fans, that doesn't mean that this is another Bushell hatchet job. Read on . . .

DEEP PURPLE
'The Deep Purple Singles, A's And B's'
(Harvest SHSM 2026)***

"OHMIGODWHAT!"

The cry of horror echoes in a million HM homes, "Why's he reviewing this, worrabout Barton?"

I'll tell you worrabout Slick Dick's kid sibling, sunbeam, he can't review it 'cos he wrote the sleevenotes. So you got me.

But don't worry, axing Purple'd be like knifing my favourite auntie. Like Richard Nixon used to say, I cannot tell a lie. Come into the confessional a sec and I'll explain.

See Purple were the first group to wean me away from Cufflinks and Archies type produce (you must remember that fateful day 'Black Night' and 'Paranoid' both got on TOTP). And 'In Rock' was not only the first album I ever owned but it was also a if not the major hard rock album of its day.

Although I was soon to wander into more Stoney-Lennon pastures, I stayed intoxicated long enough to get acquainted with and disappointed by their earlier catalogue (especially the pretentious 'Concerto For Group And Orchestra') and disillusioned with the majority of their post 'In Rock' platters. Which all boils down to a personal attachment to the era spanned by this latest compilation.

The album consists of the A and B sides of the first six Purple singles, from 'Hush' in mid-'68 to 'Fireball' in late '71. So side one comprises 'Hush'/'One More Rainy Day'; 'Emmaretta'/'Wring That Neck'; and 'Hallelujah'/'April Part One'. And it's dull. This is Purple mark one with Rod Evans and Nick Simper instead of Roger Glover and Ian Gillan, and like all roots, it's covered with clogs of earth, merely hinting at the collective blossoming to come.

Flick the disc over, however, and you've got some of the group's finest moments. The near chart-topping thunder of 'Black Night', the poppier 'Strange Kind Of Woman' and the full-frontal, finest moment drive of 'Fireball', backed respectively by 'Speed King', 'I'm Alone' (not available on any album) and 'Demon's Eye'.

Although 'Speed King' sounds somehow a lot slower now, I'm not ashamed to admit that 'Fireball' can still set the old adrenalin flowing (people who insist that only post-'76 music is worthwhile are just as sad as people who are still living in a 1970 time warp). But but but, it's reservations time.

Firstly the cover design is appalling, boasting a singularly out of place and uninspiring pistol-packing swimsuited model (if you have to resort to silly sexist selling techniques at least be like the early Roxy albums and do it properly).

More importantly, gen-u-ine Purple buffs will have side two already, while side one is of limited historical interest only. Whereas if it's a 'Greatest Hits' you're after you'd be better off with '24 Carat Purple.' On the other hand, at least this album will help preserve your originals.

GARRY BUSHELL

carries the customary variety of songs, not all of which are equally appeasing but which all do demand close attention.

Ar (gent) Rod (geddit?) commences with the song that should have been the final chapter, 'Home', a meandering somewhat Queen-flavoured item highlighting his carefully determined lyric writing. 'Silence' that follows is for my jaded palate the daddy of 'em all, and certainly a rare justification for any and all of the artists that persist in carrying 59 different keyboards around with them: a great swirling welter of Fender Rhodes and CS80 traded up to a symphonic level of energy and balance.

'I'm In The Mood' is in another sense a thoroughly motivating cut, not simply for the password of "Ellington" (refer back to 'Mr Parker's Band' off 'Pretzel Logic'?) but for the direct sense of celebration that lifts off the mix.

'No. 1', complete with Gary Moore guitar solo, and the jagged, funky 'Well, Well, Well' both fearlessly display the Morris Pert touch with that venerable explosive percussion, and 'Pastorius Mentioned' (a play on the word 'pastoral') carries a tolerably understudy from bassist Alphonso Johnson.

A slightly mixed set of blessings, therefore, and probably not sufficiently trend-linked to ensure a chart slot. But Rod Argent's provisional luxury liner built for his debut voyage shouldn't sail by unnoticed.

LINNET EVANS

VARIOUS ARTISTS
'Action Replay'
(K-Tel NE 1040)*** ½**

TIME WAS when you wanted a hit compilation -you'd buy Embassy records at Woolworths and get six contemporary hits covered by unknown artists like Rod Stewart who'd try to imitate the nasal twangs of Gerry and The Pacemakers or the Hollies and come up with a rough approximation of the original.

Nowadays K-Tel just wave a cheque book in the direction of the twenty most compilable recent chartbusters and set the result loose in record stores with a six-figure television advertising campaign.

But there's more to it than just slick marketing; K-Tel have always been fairly adept at choosing power-packed compilations and the 20 tracks they've got together for 'Action Replay' provide one hour's worth of fast-moving action from the last three month's charts in a sequence that provides its own highs and breathers. It's almost as if you selected the tracks for yourself as